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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some uses of nonprint media to support the study of novels by education students. The author suggests that students choose a novel that is short, interesting, and not too difficult; that they reach a consensus among themselves as to the theme of the novel; and that they express their interpretation through nonprint media. (Print must not be used.) The teacher is primarily a facilitator, one who has more questions than suggestions. The author, who has used this multi-media response process in his classes for four years, finds that the experience has increased his students' appreciation of literature and that it has also encouraged these prospective junior high school teachers to teach literature for the students' sake, not the teacher's. The author concludes that it is essential for students to become active, intelligent, and discriminating consumers of both print and nonprint media. He feels that this educational goal is best reached when the students, not the teachers, are the ones who use the equipment, plan the presentations, and discuss and evaluate interpretations of these media. (Author/DI)

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A NONPRINT RESPONSE TO PRINT

ED 077014

The way many of us use nonprint media is frequently described as an extension of the teacher's voice and chalkhand. We play tapes and records. We show films, filmstrips and slides. We use overhead transparencies to show charts, graphs and tables.

Early in our teaching career we learned that these uses of nonprint media strengthened our daily presentations, motivated students, helped them acquire more information and caused them to remember it for longer periods of time. Most of us continue to make good use of nonprint media when the educational goal is the acquisition and retention of information.

But there are many educational goals, some being more difficult to reach than others. To attain some goals we need help and, what is equally important, we need to use the help wisely. We might ask ourselves: Are we presently making the best use of nonprint media? Or we could ask John Holt's question: Is this thing we are doing getting us where we want to go?

I believe there are other uses of nonprint media that will help us lead students toward other educational goals, goals that are related to several important educational processes. I believe we are just beginning to tap the power of nonprint media.

The use of nonprint media that I would like to describe is known as the "Multi-Media Response Process". This use involves print. In fact, the response is to print -- to the novel. The response, however, is made through nonprint. The product is not mentioned in the title since the product itself is not considered as important as the process. Within the Multi-Media Response Process

the student is involved with a number of processes such as reading, knowing, creating, and communicating. The student plays a very active, responsible role. He is the thinker and the doer. The teacher acts as consultant and facilitator, one who is most interested in the learning process.

An explanation of the operation of and activities in the process may help to clarify the differences between the roles of student and teacher.

1. Students are invited to choose one from a limited number of novels. The novels provided are short, interesting, and not too difficult.
2. Class time is provided to begin reading the novel of their choice. A time for finishing the novel is set by the teacher.
3. Groups are made up of four or five students who have read the same novel.
4. The purpose of the groups is clarified by the teacher. Students are to reach consensus on the theme of the novel and to express their interpretation through nonprint media. Print must not be used.
5. Planning and preparing the presentation is done by the students during and after class. The average amount of time required is five class periods and at least an equal amount of time after class. Four class periods are used for discussion and preparation. The fifth period is used for making presentations and discussing presentations.
6. The presentation of each group is made to the other members of the class, many or all of whom will have read the novel used by the group.

7. Discussion between the group and the class follows each presentation. Guide-lines for the discussion are made clear by the teacher.

Class Members (a) What theme did the group present? How do you know?

Group Members (b) What theme did you present? How do you support your theme?

Class Members (c) Do you agree with the group's theme? If not, why not? If you agree, what comments and suggestions have you regarding the presentation?

Group Members (d) If you were to make another presentation based on the same novel, would you make changes? If so, what changes?

In summary, the students are given materials and asked to think through a problem. They define the problem, consider procedures for solving the problem, agree on the approach to be used, try the approach, evaluate the outcomes and, if necessary, make adjustments that would result in an improved outcome. It is a common approach to learning, one that has caused many of us to change our teaching practices.

Although the teacher establishes a number of conditions, he is primarily a resource person, one who has more questions than suggestions. He sees, however, that the students are introduced to nonprint media such as the projectors and recorders, but he does not tell them how the equipment is to be used in their presentation. He encourages the students to interpret, create, plan, arrange and present. The presentation or final product must be theirs. The teacher's interest is in the educational benefits that the student will gain from his experiences in the process.

In my four years experience with the multi-media response process I have noticed that certain features reoccur. For example, students talk to one another about the novel. Having students exchange their impressions and interpretations of a novel is something that I have always encouraged but seldom witnessed. Each year they disagree (sometimes very strongly) on the theme. They are often surprised when their interpretations are challenged by others, and immediately prepare a defence for their positions by going back to the novel. In short, they read to find answers to their own questions. They need to understand, so they read to understand. Time is forgotten. They meet after classes to find suitable music, or they rendezvous at someones home to practice reading parts. Each year special talents are uncovered. Creativity is recognized, openly admired and constantly encouraged by fellow students. The "esprit de corps" grows stronger as the day of presentation draws nearer.

How do the students react to their experience with the novel and nonprint media? Since my students were education students I obtained, by means of an assignment, two classes of reaction: one from the viewpoint of the student and one from the viewpoint of the prospective teacher. Their assignment asked them (1) to describe their experiences in the Multi-Media Response Process and (2) to state how these experiences might influence their teaching philosophy and practices in junior high school.

To represent the students' viewpoint I selected comments from those made by the five students who dealt with To Kill A Mockingbird.

The first quote was made by a student whose involvement caused her to see the relationship between literature and life.

"Because of my complete involvement in developing a multi-media response, the novel, To Kill A Mockingbird had a powerful impact

on me. It became a real experience, probably an influence on my life. It made me take a closer look around me and really put myself in the shoes of others. I'm still doing it."

Another student emphasized the creative experience.

"The Multi-Media Response Process provided us with many opportunities to participate in creative kinds of work. Creative ideas showed up, one after another, in planning ways to make our presentation, in preparing material and in organizing the materials to get across our idea. Creativity never stopped. In fact it just kept building because one idea led to another which was enhanced by yet another."

Other students mentioned how they got to know Atticus Finch, Jem and Scout, and how they practiced reading the parts so that the real sound of Scout's voice would come off the printed page.

The students who described their experiences in preparing a nonprint media response to The Light In the Forest included two quotes of special interest, one dealing with reading and the other with character study.

One student spoke for the group and for herself:

"The multi-media response process called for a new kind of reading. Ordinarily we would have simply read through the book. This time, however, we read carefully. Some of us read it two or three times to find key passages that would support our interpretations. I also learned, for the first time, and in a relatively painless way, how important the mood and setting are to the story. We spent a great deal of time discussing and finding the kind of music that would show the mood in the Indian camp, and in True Son himself. I think we found it."

Another student discovered the true character of people in the novel:

"To take part in the VTR presentation, we had to prepare by studying the characters carefully. After discussing True Son and others we found that they took on life. We found ourselves agreeing on how True Son would act in certain situations, how his mother and father would dress and how they would behave."

Allow me to quote two excerpts from the prospective teacher's viewpoint:

> If we as teachers believe that it is important to create situations in which students experience internal motivation and independent thought, then we should plan to use nonprint media and literature together.

From another prospective teacher:

> One advantage of the multi-media response approach to literature is that it demands a response from all students, a response that is of their own making, not a pre-fabricated response dished out to satisfy the teacher's need to hear the correct answer. The multi-media response approach may be one of the best ways of ensuring that literature is taught for the students' sake and not for the teachers.

To the comments made by students, I would like to add a last remark. We are told that the influence of media in the future will be considerably stronger than it is today. And since there is no law or power to ensure us that media will be used humanely, it is essential that our students become active, intelligent, discriminating consumers of both print and nonprint media. To reach this educational goal the students, not the teachers, must be the ones who use the equipment, who are actively involved in discovering and shaping an idea, in planning and making the presentation, and in discussing and evaluating the interpretations and products.